

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

22nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HINCHEY WRITES AMENDMENT TO MAKE ENDICOTT SITE A PRIORITY FOR FEDERAL AGENCY

Commends IBM for Funding Testing at High School

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today announced that he will offer an amendment to a federal spending bill that will make the Endicott Spill a priority for the federal Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR). A member of the House Appropriations Committee, Hinchey will offer the amendment to the VA-HUD Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2004.

"ATSDR is the agency charged with providing the public with the best and most useful information about the health effects of hazardous substances," said Hinchey.

"Unfortunately, like many federal agencies, ATSDR is short on funding. Without my amendment, it would be difficult for the agency to make Endicott a priority."

ATSDR, a division of the Centers for Disease Control, is directed by congressional mandate to perform specific functions concerning the effect on public health of hazardous substances in the environment. These functions include public health assessments of waste sites, health consultations concerning specific hazardous substances, health surveillance and registries, response to emergency releases of hazardous substances, applied research in support of public health assessments, information development and dissemination, and education and training concerning hazardous substances. Hinchey, who has a meeting with ATSDR officials on Thursday in Washington, will request that the agency hold a special availability session in Endicott.

Hinchey also commended IBM for indicating that it will fund air quality testing at Union-Endicott High School. At a meeting in his Washington office with the company's Vice President for Environmental Affairs on July 15, Hinchey urged IBM to demonstrate its good will by taking this action before students return to school in September.

"I had a very positive meeting with IBM officials in my office last Tuesday and I am pleased that they have agreed to do the right thing with respect to the high school," Hinchey added. "Parents need to be assured that their children are not being exposed to toxic elements in the air they are breathing at school."

A chronology of Hinchey's efforts regarding the Endicott spill is attached.

CHRONOLOGY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY HINCHEY

May 5 - Hosts meeting in Binghamton Federal Building with Endicott officials to gather input on status of the contamination.

May 8 - Meets with Wayne Balta, IBM's Vice President for Environmental Affairs in Washington office.

May 26 - Writes to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Erin Crotty to inform her of the severity of the situation and to request that the spill's Class 4 ranking on the State Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites be reviewed. All evidence indicates that this site should be a Class 2 site.

June 25 - Writes to New York State Department of Health (DOH) Commissioner Antonia Novello urging DOH to conduct a comprehensive health investigation regarding the impact of leaked hazardous chemicals on residents, particularly children, in the Village of Endicott.

July 11 - Receives DEC reply indicating unwillingness to reclassify the site -- citing IBM's cooperation as justification.

July 14 - Again writes Crotty to encourage DEC to be forthcoming with information and to reiterate the need to reclassify this site. Concurrently, a local citizen group gathers over 300 signatures urging DEC to reclassify the site.

July 15 - Has second meeting with IBM's Vice President for Environmental Affairs in Washington office. Urges company to fund air quality testing at Union-Endicott High School and the Johnson Library.

July 21 - Announces he will offer amendment making spill a priority for Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR) and ask agency to hold public availability session. Learns that IBM will fund testing at high school.

July 24 (scheduled) - Meet with ATSDR officials in Washington office.